

AN INVITATION TO EXPLORE AND EXPAND QUAKER OUTREACH

"We frequently have visitors to our meeting...but I wonder if we're doing an effective job of welcoming and including them."

"Quakerism has so much to offer....but no one knows we're here."

"I'm sure we could do a more effective job of community outreach....but who has the time for that? We're already stretched too thin."

September, 2016

Dear Monthly Meeting Clerk,

If any of the comments above sound familiar, your meeting may be interested in this invitation from New York Yearly Meeting's Outreach Working Group (OWG) .

Over the past few years, NYYM has heard increasingly from monthly meetings that they would like to share the good news of Quakerism, that they'd like to be more visible in their communities, and that they long for the perspective and energy that new attenders bring.....but there just is not enough time or person-power to get involved in outreach and "the ministry of introduction."

In response to this expressed need, the Outreach Working Group was formed earlier this year and now is offering a process to support monthly meetings in undertaking the ministry of outreach and welcoming. The process is collaborative and incremental, conducted at an individualized pace that is comfortable and appropriate to your particular meeting, with encouragement and resources suitable to your needs and leadings.

There are only three requirements for participating in this process:

- 1) Designate at least one person--but preferably two people--from your meeting to participate in conference calls that will be held every other month between November 2016 and June 2017, to share and discuss approaches for welcoming and outreach;
- 2) Agree to undertake at least one welcoming activity--large or small--from a long list of options that will be provided;
- 3) By June 2017, provide a one-page summary of your meeting's experience and learnings.

This process to support meetings' outreach efforts will be offered for two years. Monthly meetings have the option of participating for one or both years. The first year will focus on "Becoming a More Welcoming Meeting," (examining and improving the ways we receive, involve, and include new attenders and seekers) and the second year on "Becoming a More Inviting Community" (how we reach out into the community to invite others to experience Quakerism).

In addition to providing support for meetings that participate in the process, the goal is to enhance resources available to *all* meetings so that invitation and outreach can become a natural part of the life of our meetings.

Please bring this invitation to your monthly meeting or refer it to an appropriate committee for consideration. The attached page provides additional information as well as some questions to help discern whether your meeting is being led to think more about outreach and "the ministry of introduction."

If you are considering this opportunity for your meeting or would like additional information, **please contact one of us**. We'd be glad to discuss the possibilities and how this process could address outreach needs and interests your meeting has identified. We welcome your questions!

With enthusiasm for sharing the Light,

Co-convenors of the Outreach Working Group

Robin Whitely

rlwhitely@comcast.net

973-376-2392, 973-634-5742(c)

Arlene Johnson

arlene_johnson@verizon.net

973-994-2314, 973-985-2532(c)

TO DISCERN IF YOUR MEETING IS READY TO DO MORE ACTIVE OUTREACH...

FIRST CONSIDER: *WHAT IS QUAKER OUTREACH?*

Quaker outreach is sharing the presence and the message of Quakerism.

As practiced by a monthly meeting, outreach can take many forms, depending on what feels appropriate for a particular meeting and what will work in a particular community to create a greater awareness of the Quaker presence.

Outreach usually involves making sure that those who seek Friends out can find them, that visitors feel welcome when they visit, that they are thoughtfully informed about Quakerism when they do, and that they are included and invited into the life of the meeting.

Truly successful outreach communicates not only the basic who-what-where of Quakerism, but more importantly, the *why*, the *joy* of Quaker worship and community. Thus, outreach depends utterly on effective inreach--the ongoing nurture of the spiritual life of Friends and the meeting, for this is where the joy finds its source. Friends who feel led more to inreach work can still be very much engaged in an essential part of outreach.

THEN ASK *IS THERE ENERGY FOR OUTREACH IN MY MEETING?*

Outreach activities can be connected to many aspects of a meeting's life. Though some meetings have committees on outreach or advancement, often the leadings for a "ministry of introduction" arise from committee work or a sense of the needs of a surrounding community. For example:

Is your committee on Religious Education expressing interest in attracting more young families and bringing more children to the meeting?

Is the Committee on Peace and Social Action identifying needs within society or the surrounding community that the message of Quakerism could speak to?

Is Ministry and Counsel expressing energy for initiating a Quakerism 101 course or for programs to communicate the message of Quakerism?

Is your Facilities Committee talking about improvements that would make the meeting house more inviting to outside groups and newcomers?

Have recent State of the Meeting reports talked about loss of long-time members and the need to energize committees with new attenders?

Has there been discussion about reviewing and revising your welcoming materials and information on Quakerism?

FINALLY ...IF YOU ANSWERED "YES" TO ONE OR MORE OF THE ABOVE, there may be a rising leading within your meeting to actively explore and practice programs of outreach.

To learn how you can assess your meeting's outreach capability and potential, or to participate in the program sponsored by NYYM Outreach Working Group, contact Arlene Johnson (arlene_johnson@verizon.net) or Robin Whitely (rlwhitely@comcast.net).